

REMARKS

Claims 1 to 8, 12, 19 and 20 are pending in the application, of which claims 1, 8 and 12 are independent. Favorable reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Initially, Applicant thanks the Examiner for the indication that claims 1 to 7 are allowable, and for the indication that claim 10 contains allowable subject matter. In response to this indication, and without conceding the propriety of any rejections contained in the Office Action, Applicant has incorporated the subject matter of claims 9 and 10 into independent claim 8. As such, claims 1 to 7, 8 and 19 (which depends on claim 8) are believed to be in condition for allowance. Applicants have also rewritten independent 12 along the lines of claim 8 (to include the features indicated in the Office Action as being novel). Thus, claims 12 and 20 (which depends on claim 12) are also believed to be in condition for allowance.

As shown above, Applicant has also amended the claims to attend to the claim objections noted on page 2 of the Office Action.

In view of the foregoing amendments, and since no other issues remain outstanding, Applicant submits that the entire application is not in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

Finally, Applicant notes that two Japanese references from the April 7, 2003 Information Disclosure Statement were indicated, in the Office Action, as not having been considered. Applicant is therefore submitting English-language abstracts for those references, along with a new Form PTO-1449, which Applicant requests that the Examiner initial to indicate that the two references have been considered and made formally of record. To ensure that these two Japanese references are considered, Applicant is filing a Request for Continued Examination (RCE) with

Applicant : John Redford
Serial No. : 09/724,196
Filed : November 28, 2000
Page : 6 of 6

Attorney's Docket No.: 12407-004001


this Amendment. However, if the RCE is not deemed necessary, in view of the previous submission of these references, Applicant requests that the Examiner disregard the RCE.

Applicant's undersigned attorney can be reached at the address shown below. All telephone calls should be directed to the undersigned at 617-521-7896.

No additional fees are believed to be due for this Amendment, however, if any fees are due, including deficiencies in extension fees and RCE fees, please charge them to deposit account 06-1050, referencing Attorney Docket No. 12407-004001.

Respectfully submitted,

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